DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 482 609 JC 030 663

TITLE	Engaging Community Colleges: National Benchmarks of Quality. Summary of 2003 Findings [and] 2003 Findings.
INSTITUTION	Texas Univ., Austin. Community Coll. Leadership Program.
SPONS AGENCY	Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA.; Lumina Foundation for Education, Indianapolis, IN.
PUB DATE	2003-00-00
NOTE	30p.; Produced by Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Support also provided by the MetLife Foundation. Co-Sponsors are The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For the 2002 Findings, see ED 471 535.
AVAILABLE FROM	Community College Leadership Program, The University of Texas at Austin, 1 University Station D5600, Austin, TX 78712-0378. Tel: 512-471-6807; Fax: 512-471-4209; Web site: http://www.ccsse.org; e-mail: info@ccsse.org. For full text of Summary: http://www.ccsse.org/publications/ExecutiveSummary2003.pdf. For full text of 2003 Findings: http://www.austin.cc.tx.us/oiepub/ext_rpts/ccsse/2003/report_2003.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accountability; Community Colleges; Educational Needs; *Educational Objectives; Educational Quality; Excellence in Education; Instructional Effectiveness; *Program Effectiveness; *Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

This report introduces five national benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges. The benchmarks are: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student faculty interaction, and support for learners. All address institutional practices and student behaviors that research has shows are important in promoting student learning and retention. Some of the key findings of the report are the following: (1) 64% of students actively participate in class discussions versus 36% who do not; (2) 31% of students have never made a class presentation; (3) 67% of full time students spend ten or fewer hours preparing for class; (4) 49% of students worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's demands; (5) 67% of students claim that exams are relatively to extremely challenging; and (6) 31% of full time students read four or fewer assigned textbooks or books during the school year. Students were questioned regarding Academic and Support Services and they ranked the following as areas that they are most dissatisfied with: (1) career counseling; (2) job placement assistance; (3) financial aid advising; and (4) transfer credit assistance. The goal of this report is to aid colleges improve programs and services for students. Contains numerous graphs and tables. (MZ)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 482 609

CCSSE
Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Engaging Community Colleges

National Benchmarks of Quality

Summary of 2003 Findings

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Thompson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

TC030663

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CCSSE's 2003 Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

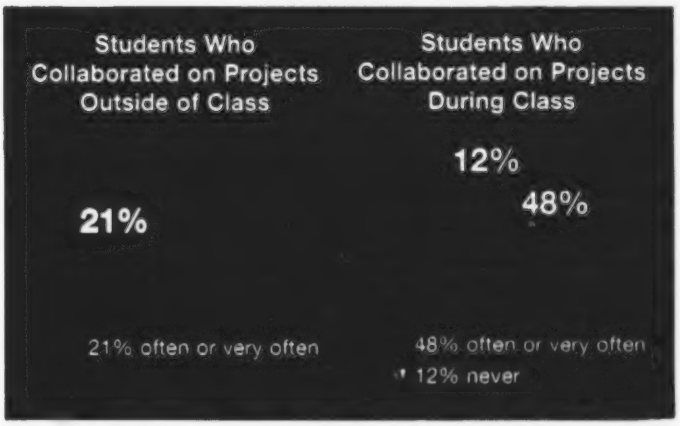
Key findings for the 2003 *CCSSE* benchmarks are described briefly below. Visit www.ccsse.org for detailed survey findings including user-customized searches, a complete list of the survey items related to each benchmark, and examples of promising educational practices at *CCSSE* member colleges.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Among the survey items associated with this benchmark, students are asked whether they participate in class discussions and whether they work with other students on projects in and outside the classroom.

Key Findings: Active and Collaborative Learning

- ★ 64% of respondents report that they asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions either often or very often. This leaves 36% who have engaged in these activities less frequently or not at all.
- ★ Only 27% have often or very often made a class presentation. Nearly a third (31%) have never done so.
- ★ Close to half (48%) often or very often worked with other students on projects during class, while 12% report never having that experience.
- ★ Only 21% worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- ★ Just 20% have at least occasionally participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course.



CCSSE Opposes Ranking

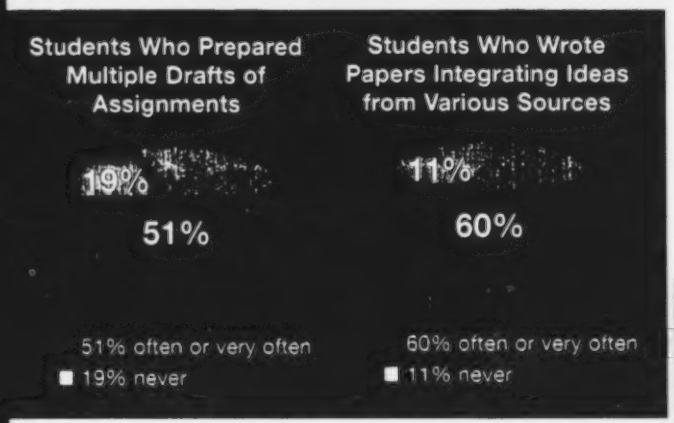
CCSSE opposes using its data to rank colleges. There is no single number that can adequately — or accurately — describe a college's performance; most colleges will perform relatively well on some benchmarks and need improvement on others. Each community college's performance should be considered in terms of its mission, institutional focus, and student characteristics. Because of differences in these areas — and variations in college resources — comparing survey results between individual institutions serves little constructive purpose and likely will be misleading. Moreover, *improvement over time* may provide the best gauge of a college's efforts to enhance student learning and persistence.

Student Effort

Students' behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will attain their educational goals. Among the survey items associated with this benchmark, students are asked whether they come to class without completing readings or assignments, whether they prepare multiple drafts of assignments before turning them in, and how frequently they use skill labs and other student services.

Key Findings: Student Effort

- ★ More than half (51%) of respondents indicate that they often or very often prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in, though almost a fifth (19%) report that they never did so.
- ★ 60% of respondents report that they often or very often worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources, while 11% never did so.



★ 67% of *full-time* students spend 10 or fewer hours preparing for class. Seventy-three percent of all respondents indicate that they come to class unprepared at least some of the time, and 27% indicate that they never do so.

Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Among the survey items associated with this benchmark, students are asked how many books they have read, how many papers they have written, and whether they have worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations.

Key Findings: Academic Challenge

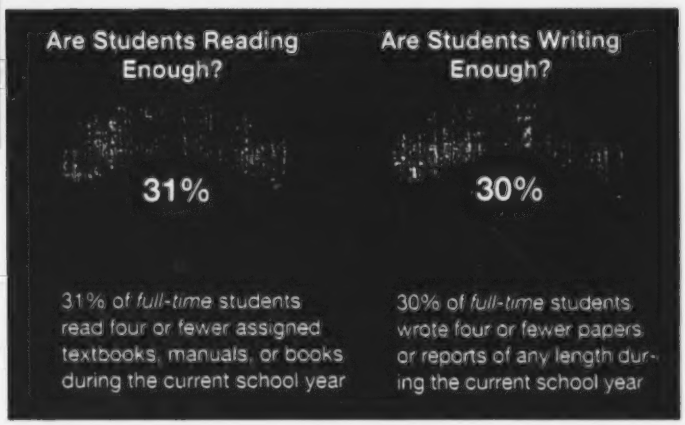
★ 49% of students indicate that they often or very often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations.

★ 31% of *full-time* students report that they have read four or fewer assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings during the current school year. (The survey is administered in February- April.)

★ 30% of *full-time* students report that they have written four or fewer papers or reports of any length during the current school year.

★ 67% indicate that their exams are relatively to extremely challenging, while 10% find them relatively to extremely easy.

★ Surveyed students report that their coursework emphasizes "very much" or "quite a bit" using information to perform a new skill (61%) and analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory (65%); but smaller percentages of students report an emphasis on the mental activities of synthesis (57%), application (55%), and judgment (50%).


Are Students Reading Enough?
31%
31% of *full-time* students read four or fewer assigned textbooks, manuals, or books during the current school year
Are Students Writing Enough?
30%
30% of *full-time* students wrote four or fewer papers or reports of any length during the current school year

Student-Faculty Interaction

In general, the more interaction students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Among the survey items associated with this benchmark, students are asked whether they discussed grades or assignments with an instructor, talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor, or worked with instructors on activities other than coursework.

Key Findings: Student-Faculty Interaction

★ A third of students (33%) say they have never used e-mail to communicate with an instructor. Close to one-third (31%), however, have used e-mail for that purpose either often or very often.

★ 45% report that they have discussed grades or assignments with an instructor either often or very often, leaving over half who have done so occasionally or never.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The National Picture: Key Issues and Challenges

Just as no single number can adequately — or accurately — describe a single college's performance, no single view of overall results can describe the performance of community colleges across the country. Several interesting patterns emerge in a review of the national picture — some that confirm long-held beliefs, some that reveal unexpected information.

★ **Capture Time Is Critical.** "Capture time" — the time colleges have to engage students — is limited because students have multiple demands on their time and spend limited time on campus. *CCSSE* 2003 data show that overall, students' engagement in out-of-class activities is low. Because vital capture time is in short supply, community colleges might gain significant ground in retention and student learning by expanding the design and use of *intentionally engaging* classroom activities, course requirements and assignments, and assessments.

★ **Student Persistence Remains a Challenge.** Nearly one in 10 students (9%) are "uncertain" whether they will return to the college the following year. An additional 5% have no current plans to return to the college (a response that is different from saying that they will accomplish their goals and not return for that reason). When viewed in the context of institutional and public priorities placed on promoting student persistence, these are disturbing findings, but many community colleges already are taking steps to address them.

★ **Student Aspirations: Charting a Path Is Essential for Success.** Given both research and experience indicating that goal-setting can be particularly important to at-risk students, several *CCSSE* findings add impetus to calls for advising strategies that are designed to be engaging.

★ **Promising Results for Students of Color.** Taken as a group, African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are more engaged than their fellow students who are white. Though the differences are fairly small, they are consistent, and they suggest that students of color are exerting relatively more effort while experiencing greater academic challenge.

CCSSE is supported by grants from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Lumina Foundation for Education, and the MetLife Foundation. Co-sponsors are The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Editorial and design by KSA-Plus Communications, Inc.

4A

CCSSE
Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Community College Leadership Program
The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station D5600 ▪ Austin, TX 78712-0378
Telephone: (512) 471-6807 ▪ Fax: (512) 471-4209
E-mail: info@ccsse.org ▪ Web site: www.ccsse.org

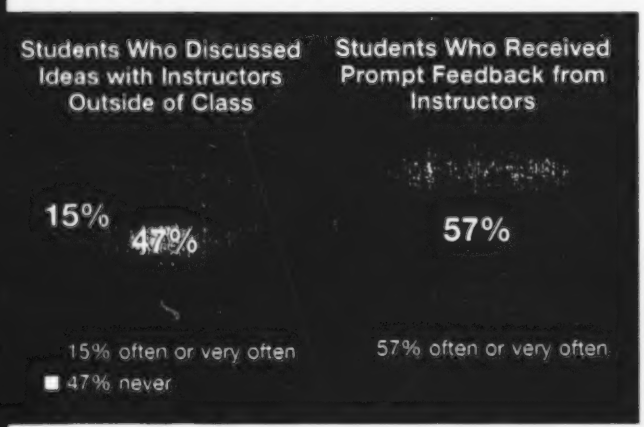
Students' Views of Academic and Support Services

	Most Important	Most Frequently Used	Most Satisfied With	Most Dissatisfied With
1	Academic advising/planning	Computer labs	Computer labs	Career counseling
2	Computer labs	Financial aid advising	Academic advising/planning	Job placement assistance
3	Financial aid advising	Academic advising/planning	Financial aid advising	Financial aid advising
4	Career counseling	Skill labs	Skill labs	Transfer credit assistance

- ★ While 25% of students have often or very often talked with an advisor or instructor about career plans, 31% say they have never done so.
- ★ Only 15% of students report having often or very often discussed ideas from their readings or classes with instructors outside of class, and 47% have *never* engaged with faculty in that way.
- ★ 57% state that they often or very often received prompt feedback from instructors on their performance, which is known as an important factor in student learning and retention.

Key Findings: Support for Learners

- ★ While students attribute relatively high importance to academic advising and career counseling, one-third to one-half of students rarely or never take advantage of those services.
- ★ While 70% of students indicate that their college provides the support they need to succeed at the college either "quite a bit" or "very much," a smaller percentage — 42% — report that the college provides the financial support they need to afford their education.



Support for Learners

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus. Among the survey items associated with this benchmark, students are asked whether their college helps them cope with nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.), whether their college provides the financial support they need to afford their education, and how frequently they use services such as academic advising and career counseling.

Understanding and Using Benchmarks

The purpose of "benchmarking" is to compare performance of like institutions — and through that process, to identify opportunities for improvement and potential models of "best practice." But *CCSSE* and its member colleges must not shy away from the question of whether the performance reflected in the survey results is *good enough*, either for individual institutions or for community colleges nationally.

Thus, *CCSSE* presents information in two ways: (1) each benchmark, described with a standardized mean of 50, provides an overview of a particular performance area, a way to compare performance on various benchmarks within an institution, and a way to compare performance among groups of similar institutions; and (2) results for individual survey items, presented in absolute terms, are the place to see exactly what is happening and to ask the difficult question, *how good is good enough?*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Growing Demand for Higher Education, A Growing Need for Quality

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement *(CCSSE)* provides a resource for assessing quality in community college education — and a tool that helps colleges improve their performance. The need for such a tool is acute. Community colleges across the United States, committed to providing access to quality education, are challenged by both escalating enrollments and severely reduced resources.

Community colleges have the complicated task of providing broad access to ensure that *everyone* has an entry point to quality higher education — and then designing effective educational experiences for a highly diverse population of students with varying goals and competing demands on their time.

In trying to meet increased demand with reduced resources — without compromising on quality — community colleges need tools that can help them better assess their students' needs and strengthen institutional efforts to promote retention and learning. As community colleges endeavor to provide access *and* quality, *CCSSE* is a tool that can help them succeed.

A Focus on Student Engagement

This year, *CCSSE* introduces its national benchmarks for effective educational practice in community colleges. The introduction of these benchmarks creates unprecedented opportunities for community colleges, their students, their communities, and policymakers, all of whom have a stake in quality higher education.

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter — the more likely they are to learn and to achieve their academic goals.

CCSSE benchmarks focus on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement — and that correlate highly with student learning and persistence. They are one useful way to view results of *CCSSE*'s survey, *The Community College Student Report*, which is administered directly to students during classes at participating colleges.

CCSSE provides the colleges with survey results, along with tools they can use to improve programs and services for students. *CCSSE* also makes its results public. The organization's Web site, www.ccsse.org, provides detailed survey results as well as information about student engagement and community colleges.

Benchmarks of Quality

The five benchmarks of effective educational practice in community colleges are **active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction,** and **support for learners.** These benchmarks are tools that colleges can use to:

- ★ convert data into useful information;
- ★ compare their performance to that of similar institutions, to the aspirations of their own faculty and staff, and to the full *CCSSE* population of community colleges;
- ★ compare their own performance across benchmarks;
- ★ identify areas in need of improvement and monitor the effects of improvement initiatives; and
- ★ track their progress toward identified institutional goals.

Because the results are public, benchmarks also can stimulate conversation — within colleges and among policymakers — about effective educational practice.

CCSSE
Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Engaging Community Colleges

National Benchmarks of Quality

2003 Findings

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Acknowledgments

At the top of *CCSSE*'s list of acknowledgments are the 65,300 community college students who responded to the 2003 Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Because they took the time to tell us, we — along with their colleges — now are equipped with a greater understanding of the challenges these students bring to college with them, the ways community colleges serve them well, and the opportunities that exist to strengthen the quality of their learning experience.

Our obligation — and the expressed commitment of many of *CCSSE*'s member colleges — is to reciprocate by seizing those opportunities for improvement, continuously reaching for excellence in learning, teaching, and student success.

Kay M. McClenney
Director
Community College Survey of Student Engagement

Supported by Grants from
The Pew Charitable Trusts
Lumina Foundation for Education
MetLife Foundation

Co-Sponsored by
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching
The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning

Introduction

Foreword
A Commitment to Improvement — Even in Challenging Times 2

A Growing Demand for Higher Education, A Growing Need for Quality 3

The *CCSSE* Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice 5

2003 Benchmarks

The 2003 Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice 7
Active and Collaborative Learning
Student Effort
Academic Challenge
Student-Faculty Interaction
Support for Learners

Benchmarking Progress: High-Performing Colleges 12

National Results

The National Picture: Key Issues and Challenges 13
Capture Time Is Critical
Student Persistence Remains a Challenge
Student Aspirations: Charting a Path Is Essential for Success
Promising Results for Students of Color
Closing the Gaps: A Look at High-Risk Students

***CCSSE* National Advisory Board** 20

***CCSSE* Technical Advisory Panel** 20

Foreword
A Commitment to Improvement — Even in Challenging Times

With this report, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement *(CCSSE)* presents the results of its first national administration, enabling community college leaders and members of the wider public to examine the performance of America's largest — but probably least-well-understood — higher education sector.

Critical timing. These findings come at a critical moment. With tax support for higher education slipping in all states, the central mission of the community college — full access to quality education — is in jeopardy. Under such circumstances, it is tempting for some policymakers to cut access and to pass rising higher-education costs on to those remaining students who are willing and able to pay. Others may believe the inevitable, albeit equally regrettable, solution is to cut corners on quality simply to accommodate higher numbers of students. For community colleges — and for the nation they serve — these are unacceptable options. If we are to maintain world leadership, we need both broad participation *and* a first-class educational system.

Invaluable information. Access is easy to quantify. Quality is tough. Like the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), created for four-year colleges and universities, *CCSSE*'s contents are based on the best research available about the institutional practices and student behaviors that lead to persistence and meaningful learning. This report provides the first national benchmarks of community college performance on these critical dimensions. Using these benchmarks of effective educational practice,

- ★ community college leaders can identify and address potential weaknesses, and locate and learn from "best practice" partners at other institutions;
- ★ policymakers and system heads can establish goals for performance and chart progress; and
- ★ parents and potential students can research their educational options and be prepared to ask the right kinds of questions about an effective college experience.

Unprecedented accountability. *CCSSE* represents an unprecedented public commitment by the nation's community colleges to hold themselves accountable for high quality, despite burgeoning enrollments and constrained resources. *CCSSE* findings for individual participating institutions are accessible to the public through published reports and online interactive data-reporting tools.

Informed policymaking. *CCSSE* data paint a portrait of the many faces of the nation's two-year college students and the multiple ways they choose to enact their education. This is not a simple picture, and it is easily misunderstood by those who seek easy fixes, such as minimal graduation rates or improved test scores, for postsecondary education. But the nation's leaders must fully understand this complex picture if we are to maintain the high rates of educational attainment on which our economy and polity now depend.

Community colleges are doing the heavy lifting in keeping U.S. educational attainment rates the highest in the world. *CCSSE* results help keep these colleges honest through a public commitment to high standards and best practice. At the same time, they remind us all that there are many effective ways to go to college in a diverse and productive society. Both kinds of information will be needed to chart the challenging course ahead.

Peter Ewell
Chair
CCSSE National Advisory Board

A Growing Demand for Higher Education, A Growing Need for Quality

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement *(CCSSE)* provides a resource for assessing quality in community college education — and a tool that helps colleges improve their performance.

Some might ask, "Why bother?" For those who look at education as a commodity, community colleges do not lack customers. In fact, in recent years, we've seen increased enrollment, in many cases record enrollment, at our nation's community colleges. Demand is increasing for a number of reasons.

- Access to higher education is more critical for everyone; postsecondary education has become the minimum educational requirement for holding a job that supports at least a middle-class standard of living — and for meeting the increasingly complex demands of citizenship.
- Employees responding to the changing requirements of their jobs — and their employers — turn to community colleges for ongoing training.
- Workers responding to the variable national economy rely on community colleges to prepare for career changes.
- Large numbers of traditional college-age students — the so-called "baby-boom echo" — are beginning their college experience at community colleges because these institutions are accessible and affordable.

In a paradox of difficult times, the faltering economy intensifies the demand, even as it leads to reduced resources. During the economic downturn, community colleges attract students affected by recession, such as displaced workers who want to develop more marketable skills and students who can't afford elevated tuitions at four-year public colleges.

So, why are community colleges picking this particular time to focus on assessment and improvement? Because they don't view education as a commodity. Rather, they know that quality higher education — and lifelong learning — are necessary for individual, regional, and national economic success; for preserving families' and our nation's quality of life; and for ensuring the vitality of democracy in our society.

In trying to meet increased demand with reduced resources — without compromising on quality — community colleges need tools that can help them better assess their students' needs and strengthen institutional efforts to promote retention and learning.

In addition, community colleges are accountable to the public they serve. Economic health — both regional economic viability and national economic competitiveness — depends on increasing every individual's educational attainment. That means keeping the doors to quality higher education open to everyone — and making sure all students have the support they need to achieve their academic goals.

Community colleges endeavor to provide access *and* quality. *CCSSE* is a tool that can help them succeed.

"The Bush administration likely will make accountability a centerpiece of its plans for reauthorization of the Higher Education Act this year. It is important that educators help guide the accountability debate by focusing it on student learning. CCSSE *is the one instrument that measures the learning environment and how engaged our students are."*

— **George Boggs**
President and CEO
American Association of Community Colleges

Why Student Engagement?

Community colleges have the complicated task of providing broad access to ensure that *everyone* has an entry point to quality higher education — and then designing effective educational experiences for a highly diverse population of students with varying goals and competing demands on their time.

Colleges adopt a variety of strategies to meet these wide-ranging needs and, like all organizations trying to accomplish complex missions, benefit from evaluating the progress toward their objectives. For community colleges, the overriding aims are to help students learn and achieve their own academic goals. Student engagement is a valuable yardstick for assessing whether — and to what extent — an institution is employing educational practices likely to produce the desired results.

Research shows that the more actively engaged students are — with college faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter — the more likely they are to learn and to achieve their academic goals.

Measuring student engagement provides insight into the challenges students and colleges face, finding solutions to overcome them, and ultimately, gauging their success as educational institutions.

For more information about the challenges facing community colleges and their students — the great variety in students' goals, the many demands on their time, and economics — visit www.ccsse.org.

The 2003 *CCSSE* Report

CCSSE's survey, *The Community College Student Report*, focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that demonstrate student engagement — and that correlate highly with student learning and retention.

CCSSE works with participating colleges to administer the survey, using quantitative and qualitative items to measure students' level of engagement in a variety of areas. The colleges then receive their survey results, along with analysis they can use to improve their programs and services for students. All *CCSSE* work is grounded in research about what works in strengthening student learning and persistence.

CCSSE also makes its results public. The organization's Web site, www.ccsse.org, provides information about student engagement and community colleges as well as detailed survey results. The site provides results for the full *CCSSE* population, various subgroups within the population, and individual colleges. Users can create customized data searches, choosing to view data by variables including the type of institution (e.g., institutional size or location); by student characteristic (e.g., full-time or part-time students, gender, or credential-/noncredential-seeking students); and by combinations of these variables.

The *CCSSE* Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

Beginning with these 2003 survey results — *CCSSE*'s first national administration — *CCSSE* is reporting survey results in terms of five national benchmarks of effective educational practice. The introduction of these benchmarks creates unprecedented opportunities for community colleges — and for their students, their communities, and policymakers, all of whom have a stake in quality higher education. For the first time, community colleges have the ability to examine their performance in areas critical to the quality of teaching and learning — and to compare their performance to similar institutions as well as to community colleges nationally.

The five benchmarks of effective educational practice are **active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction,** and **support for learners.** These benchmarks are tools that community colleges can use to:

- ★ convert data into useful information;
- ★ compare their performance to that of similar institutions, to the aspirations of their own faculty and staff, and to the full *CCSSE* population of community colleges;
- ★ compare their own performance across benchmarks;
- ★ identify areas in need of improvement and monitor the effects of improvement initiatives; and
- ★ track their progress toward identified institutional goals.

Because the results are public, benchmarks also can stimulate conversation — within colleges and among policymakers — about effective educational practice.

Understanding and Using Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

What Are Benchmark Scores?

Benchmarks are groups of conceptually related items that address key areas of student engagement. *CCSSE*'s five benchmarks denote areas that educational research has shown to be important in quality educational practice, and they provide useful ways to look at each college's performance in these areas.

Every college has a score for each benchmark. Each individual benchmark score was computed by averaging the scores on survey items that comprise that benchmark. Benchmark scores are standardized so that the mean — the average of all participating students — always is 50 and the standard deviation is 25.

The most valuable use of benchmarks is to see an individual college's deviation from the mean, and the standardized score provides an easy way to assess whether an individual college is performing above or below the mean (50) on each benchmark. The standardized scores make it possible for colleges to compare their own performance across benchmarks and with groups of similar colleges.

CCSSE Opposes Ranking

CCSSE opposes using its data to rank colleges. There is no single number that can adequately — or accurately — describe a college's performance. most colleges will perform relatively well on some benchmarks and need improvement on others. Each community college's performance should be considered in terms of its mission, institutional focus, and student characteristics. Because of differences in these areas — and variations in college resources — comparing survey results between individual institutions serves little constructive purpose and likely will be misleading. Moreover, *improvement over time* may provide the best gauge of a college's efforts to enhance student learning and persistence.

How Good Is Good Enough?

The purpose of "benchmarking" is to compare performance of like institutions — and through that process, to identify opportunities for improvement and potential models of "best practice." But *CCSSE* and its member colleges must not shy away from the question of whether the performance reflected in survey results is *good enough*, either for individual institutions or for community colleges nationally. Answering that question often requires looking at data (means and frequencies) for individual survey items associated with the benchmarks.

Thus, *CCSSE* presents information in two ways: (1) each benchmark, described with a standardized mean of 50, provides an overview of a particular performance area, a way to compare performance on various benchmarks within an institution, and a way to compare performance among groups of similar institutions; and (2) results for individual survey items, presented in absolute terms, are the place to see exactly what is happening and to ask the difficult question, *how good is good enough?*

"Without question, Community College of Denver's participation in CCSSE *... has been a springboard to internal change; external recognition (local, statewide, and national); increased external partnerships; strengthened student programs; enrollment growth; fiscal stability; and internal gratification."*

— **Christine Johnson**
President
Community College of Denver

The 2003 Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice

For each benchmark, this section provides: (1) a brief description of the benchmark, (2) the list of survey items associated with the benchmark, and (3) key findings from the 2003 survey for items related to that benchmark. In addition, we offer examples of engagement in action — relevant practices from colleges that are among the high performers on the benchmark among institutions of similar size.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives. The following seven survey items contribute to this benchmark.

During the current school year, how often have you:

- ★ Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions
- ★ Made a class presentation
- ★ Worked with other students on projects during class
- ★ Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments
- ★ Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)
- ★ Participated in a community-based project as a part of a regular course
- ★ Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

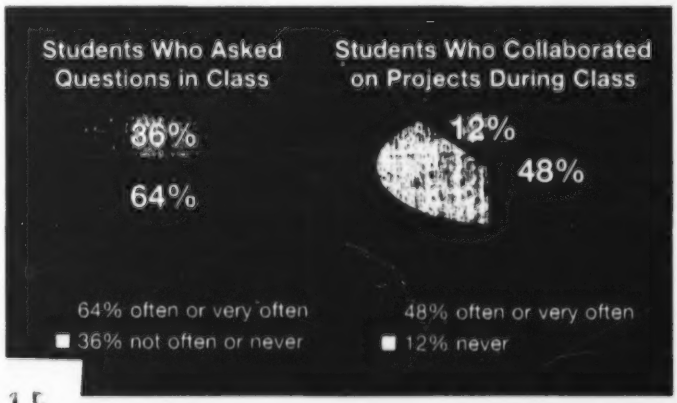
Key Findings: Active and Collaborative Learning

- ★ 64% of respondents report that they asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions either often or very often. This leaves 36% who have engaged in these activities less frequently or not at all.
- ★ Only 27% have often or very often made a class presentation. Nearly a third (31%) have never done so.
- ★ Close to half (48%) often or very often worked with other students on projects during class, while 12% report never having that experience.
- ★ Only 21% worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- ★ A small percentage (7%) have tutored or taught other students.
- ★ Just 20% have at least occasionally participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course.
- ★ 52% often or very often discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)

Engagement in Action

The **Houston (TX) Community College System**'s (HCCS) popular service learning program engages students academically and socially. Through partnerships that two HCCS-Southwest instructors developed with local nonprofit agencies, students have clocked more than 20,000 hours of service with more than 125 programs over the past five years. Service learning helps students hone intellectual and social skills, gain experience in real work environments, and develop a commitment to addressing social problems facing the community.

The Math Express to Success (MES) program at **Phoenix College** (AZ) compresses three algebra courses into a single semester. Cohorts of 15 to 20 students attend class for three hours a day and engage in three- to four-person teams for practice, tutoring, and peer teaching.



Student Effort

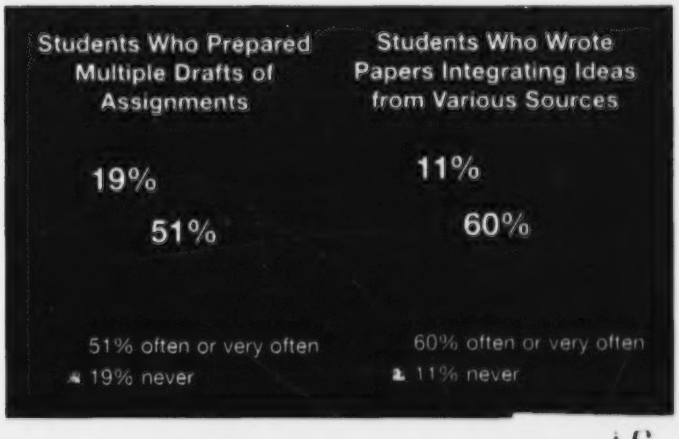
Students' behaviors contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will attain their educational goals. "Time on task" is a key variable, and there are a variety of settings and means through which students may apply themselves to the learning process. Eight survey items that indicate how frequently students engage in a number of activities important to their learning and success are associated with this benchmark. They are:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- ★ Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in
- ★ Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources
- ★ Come to class without completing readings or assignments
- ★ Used peer or other tutoring services
- ★ Used skill labs
- ★ Used a computer lab

During the current school year:

- ★ How many books did you read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment
- ★ How many hours did you spend in a typical week preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, or other activities related to your program)



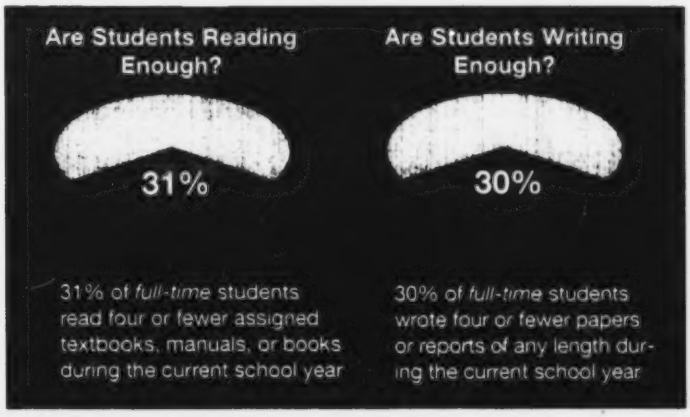
Key Findings: Student Effort

- ★ More than half (51%) of respondents indicate that they often or very often prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in, though almost a fifth (19%) report that they never did so.
- ★ 60% of respondents report that they often or very often worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources, while 11% never did so.
- ★ Just 12% of full-time students estimate spending 21 or more hours per week preparing for class. Sixty-seven percent of full-time students spend 10 or fewer hours preparing for class. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of survey respondents indicate that they come to class unprepared at least some of the time, while just over one-quarter (27%) indicate that they never do so.
- ★ Less than one-quarter (23%) of surveyed students participate sometimes or often in tutoring, while 45% do so rarely or never. Use of skill labs by 38% of students may be an encouraging result, and the use is more common among students who are academically underprepared.

Engagement in Action

Faculty and students at **Pierce College** (WA) jointly developed *ED 110: Student Success*, an innovative first-year seminar. The three-credit-hour course explores learning strategies and identifies learning styles. It also connects students early in their academic experience to critical college resources — writing and math centers, peer tutoring, disability support services, and others — that foster student success.

F.H. LaGuardia Community College (NY) engages students in collaborative projects — such as student-led seminars, role-playing activities, problem-based learning assignments, and interdisciplinary research — that promote shared responsibility for learning. The college also has an electronic portfolio project in which students select examples of their academic work to present, reflect upon, and self-assess on their own Web sites.


Are Students Reading Enough?
31%
31% of *full-time* students read four or fewer assigned textbooks, manuals, or books during the current school year
Are Students Writing Enough?
30%
30% of *full-time* students wrote four or fewer papers or reports of any length during the current school year

Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards faculty members use to evaluate student performance. They are:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- ★ Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations

How much does your coursework at this college emphasize:

- ★ Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory
- ★ Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences in new ways
- ★ Making judgments about the value or soundness of information, arguments, or methods
- ★ Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations
- ★ Using information you have read or heard to perform a new skill

During the current school year:

- ★ How many assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings did you read
- ★ How many papers or reports of any length did you write
- ★ To what extent have your examinations challenged you to do your best work

How much does this college emphasize:

- ★ Encouraging you to spend significant amounts of time studying

Key Findings: Academic Challenge

- ★ 49% of students indicate that they very often or often worked harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations.
- ★ 70% of students surveyed indicate that their college encourages them to spend significant amounts of time studying, either "quite a bit" or "very much."
- ★ 31% of *full-time* students report that they have read four or fewer assigned textbooks, manuals, books, or book-length packs of course readings during the current school year. (The survey is administered in February–April.)
- ★ 30% of *full-time* students report that they have written four or fewer papers or reports of any length during the current school year.
- ★ 67% indicate that their exams are relatively to extremely challenging, while 10% find them relatively to extremely easy.
- ★ Surveyed students report that their coursework emphasizes "very much" or "quite a bit" using information to perform a new skill (61%) and analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory (65%); but smaller percentages of students report an emphasis on the mental activities of synthesis (57%), application (55%), and judgment (50%).

Engagement in Action

Cuyahoga Community College (OH) has identified core competencies all students are expected to meet prior to graduation. The college also has developed an inventory of how each course contributes to these competencies.

Northwest Vista College (TX) faculty developed core student-learning outcomes called ASK (Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge). These outcomes guide curriculum development in areas such as critical and creative thinking, writing and speaking, and working with others. The history faculty team, for example, uses primary source analysis, writing assignments, and multiple modes of assessment to engage students in critical thinking.

Student-Faculty Interaction

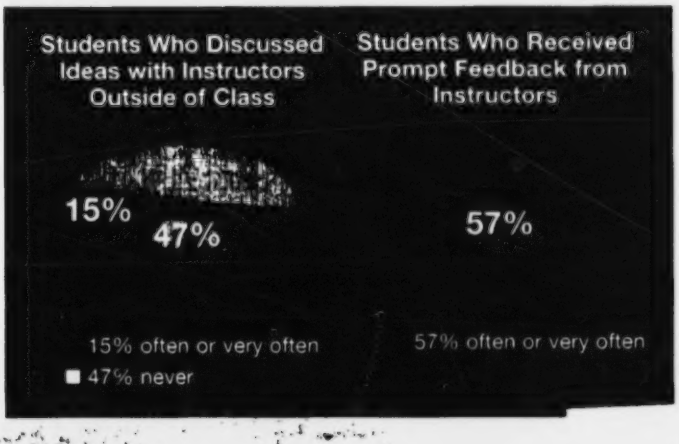
In general, the more interaction students have with their teachers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Personal interaction with faculty members strengthens students' connections to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress. Working with an instructor on a project or serving with faculty members on a college committee lets students see firsthand how experts identify and solve practical problems. Through such interactions, faculty members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong learning. The six items used in this benchmark are:

During the current school year, how often have you:

- ★ Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor
- ★ Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor
- ★ Talked about career plans with an instructor or advisor
- ★ Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with instructors outside of class
- ★ Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from instructors on your performance
- ★ Worked with instructors on activities other than coursework

Key Findings: Student-Faculty Interaction

- ★ A third of students (33%) say they have never used e-mail to communicate with an instructor. Close to one-third (31%), however, have used e-mail for that purpose either often or very often.
- ★ 45% report that they have discussed grades or assignments with an instructor either often or very often, leaving over half who have done so occasionally or never.
- ★ While 25% of students have often or very often talked with an advisor or instructor about career plans, 31% say they have never done so.
- ★ Only 15% of students report having often or very often discussed ideas from their readings or classes with instructors outside of class, and 47% have never engaged with faculty in that way. Only 8% of students say that they have often or very often worked with instructors on activities outside of class.
- ★ 57% state that they often or very often received prompt feedback from instructors on their performance, which is known as an important factor in student learning and retention. And these community college students generally give faculty members quite positive ratings regarding their availability and helpfulness.



Engagement in Action

At **Northwest Vista College** (TX), faculty teams combine active learning and electronic media to enhance student engagement with faculty and fellow students. In the weekend learning community, for example, students indicate increased connection with the instructors and fellow students through weekly Web assignments, frequent online communication with the instructors, and electronic collaboration on assignments.

The **Houston (TX) Community College System** (HCCS) builds learning experiences in multiple disciplines around a common book, selected by faculty each year. HCCS, a large, complex, multicultural urban institution, uses the common book to link faculty and students as members of a learning college — and to increase students' interaction with one another and with faculty and staff. One year, a psychology instructor asked her students to analyze the primary characters in Marsha Recknagel's *If Nights Could Talk* according to Erickson's theories of personality development — and Recknagel, a local Rice University English professor, participated in the dialogue.

Support for Learners

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus. Community college students also benefit from services targeted to assist them with academic and career planning, academic skill development, and other areas that may affect learning and retention. The following seven survey items contribute to this benchmark:

How much does this college emphasize:

- ★ Providing the support you need to help you succeed at this college
- ★ Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- ★ Helping you cope with your nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)
- ★ Providing the support you need to thrive socially
- ★ Providing the financial support you need to afford your education

During the current school year, how often have you:

- ★ Used academic advising/planning services
- ★ Used career counseling services

Key Findings: Support for Learners

- ★ While students attribute relatively high importance to academic advising and career counseling, one-third to one-half of students rarely or never take advantage of those services.
- ★ Highest levels of dissatisfaction are expressed with (1) career counseling, (2) job placement assistance, (3) financial aid advising, and (4) transfer credit assistance.
- ★ While 70% of students indicate that their college provides the support they need to succeed at the college either "quite a bit" or "very much," a smaller percentage — 42% — report that the college provides the financial support they need to afford their education.
- ★ Less than one-quarter (23%) report that the college helps them cope with nonacademic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) either quite a bit or very much, and 43% say that "very little" help is provided on that front.
- ★ 43% report that their college puts emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Students' Views of Academic and Support Services

	Most Important	Most Frequently Used	Most Satisfied With
1	Academic advising/planning	Computer labs	Computer labs
2	Computer labs	Financial aid advising	Academic advising/planning
3	Financial aid advising	Academic advising/planning	Financial aid advising
4	Career counseling	Skill labs	Skill labs

Engagement in Action

To improve discussion between students and their assigned faculty advisors, **Tallahassee Community College** (FL) developed an interactive online advising system that combines resources for planning and record-keeping with an online tool to input and modify every student's individual plan each semester.

F.H. LaGuardia Community College (NY) has an "eTransfer" program through which online groups of students, peer mentors, faculty, and counselors explore career development and the transfer process.

Mountain View College (TX) provides targeted academic advising, financial support, career counseling, tutoring, and other support services for many different cohorts including single parents, first-generation students, at-risk students, and students whose first language is not English. The college offers year-round professional counseling, seven-day-per-week tutoring, academic Page-a-Tutors for technical majors, and online academic advising.

Sinclair Community College (OH) views students' issues as the college's issues, and the college engages in ongoing customer service training. It has centralized analysis and marketing of all scholarships and financial aid; improved the registration process; and increased the marketing of student-centered counseling, tutorial and career planning, and student activity resources.

Benchmarking Progress: High-Performing Colleges

Affirming the spirit of benchmarking, throughout this report *CCSSE* offers examples of promising educational practices at colleges that demonstrate outstanding performance on particular benchmarks. These examples demonstrate creative thinking and a commitment to intentionally engaging strategies that colleges of all sizes can use to improve student success and persistence on their campuses.

Additional strategies for engagement, often cutting across more than one benchmark area, are reflected in the following examples:

Palo Alto College (TX) is a writing-intensive campus where papers are required in most classes. To promote success with the college's rigorous curriculum, many professors schedule appointments with each student to allow one-on-one interaction. Students who have missed several classes also are referred to appropriate student services through an Early Alert program. Palo Alto College also has a "mastery of learning" program in reading, English for Speakers of Other Languages, and math, in which students navigate courses at their own pace. Results show improved course completion and progression using this approach.

Skagit Valley College (WA) has learning communities — thematic, integrative courses — that encourage students to engage in subjects more fully and to see education as a dynamic, interconnected process.

Students at **F.H. LaGuardia Community College** (NY) apply their learning through required internship experiences, tutoring, mentoring new students, and participation in the college's leadership and diversity program. For faculty, professional development focuses on developing pedagogies that foster inquiry, synthesis, and problem-solving. The college's Writing in the Disciplines program assists faculty in incorporating writing-to-learn approaches in all majors.

Top Performers

The following colleges, presented in alphabetical order within their size categories, were among the top performers on three or more benchmarks in 2003.

Extra-Large Colleges *(15,000 or more students)*
Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (NM)
Cuyahoga Community College (OH)
Houston Community College System (TX)
Mt. San Antonio College (CA)
North Harris Montgomery Community College District (TX)

Large Colleges *(8,000–14,999 students)*
Douglas College (BC, CAN)
F.H. LaGuardia Community College (NY)
Oakton Community College (IL)

Medium Colleges *(4,500–7,999 students)*
Mountain View College (TX)
Northwest Vista College (TX)
Palo Alto College (TX)
Pierce College (WA)
Skagit Valley College (WA)

Small Colleges *(4,499 or fewer students)*
Cascadia Community College (WA)
Louisiana Delta Community College (LA)
New Hampshire Community and Technical College - Berlin (NH)

The National Picture: Key Issues and Challenges

Just as no single number can adequately — or accurately — describe a single college's performance, no single view of overall results can describe the performance of community colleges across the country. Understanding the national picture requires viewing it from a variety of angles; in this section, therefore, we offer several perspectives on survey results and the challenges facing community colleges.

With a close look at the data, interesting trends and patterns emerge. While the survey results confirm some long-held beliefs, they also reveal unexpected information: similarities where we expected differences, challenges that are greater than anticipated, and happily, some pleasant surprises. The findings also highlight several issues that warrant further study and monitoring.

For specific findings, including means and frequencies for individual survey items, sorted by student-level or institution-level variables, visit www.ccsse.org.

Capture Time Is Critical

"Capture time" — the time colleges have to engage students — is limited because students have multiple demands on their time and spend limited time on campus. *CCSSE* 2003 data show that overall, students' engagement in out-of-class activities is low; 87% of students do not participate in college-sponsored extracurricular activities, and students' interactions with faculty and with one another outside the structured classroom experience are scant.

Two variables that magnify the importance of focusing on available capture time are enrollment status (part-time versus full-time enrollment) and the time of day students attend classes.

Enrollment Status

Across all benchmarks, differences between full-time and part-time students indicate that part-time students are significantly less engaged in their educational experience. There are many potential explanations for this finding, most obviously the multiple commitments to work and family generally observed among part-time students. Even if colleges can identify the cause, however, the problem merits attention: Part-time students represent about two-thirds of community college students, so it is important to find more effective ways to engage them.

Promising Findings

Despite results that show relatively low levels of engagement of part-time students, those individuals still provide quite favorable ratings of instructors' availability and helpfulness. They indicate that they receive prompt feedback from instructors — a key factor in student retention and success — just as often as do full-time students. They also are less likely to come to class unprepared than are full-time students.

Potential Challenges

The 2003 survey results suggest that part-time students miss out on some of the benefits of interaction with other students:

- 14% of part-time students (versus 7% of full-time students) *never* worked with other students on projects during class.
- 47% of part-time students (versus 31% of full-time students) *never* worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- Only 36% of part-time students (versus 47% of full-time students) often or very often have conversations with students of different religious beliefs, personal values, or political opinions. Similar figures reflect differences in frequency of conversations with students of a different race/ethnicity.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Part-time students also use technology less often to interact with others. More than four in 10 part-time students (43%, versus 33% of full-time students) *never* used an electronic medium to discuss or complete an assignment.

Finally, part-time students report significantly less interaction with instructors and advisors than do their full-time counterparts. Only 42% of part-time students (versus 52% of full-time students) report discussing grades or assignments often or very often with an instructor. More than half (51%) of part-time students (versus 39% of full-time students) never discussed ideas from readings or classes with an instructor outside of class.

Time of Day Classes Are Attended — and Taught

The challenges community colleges confront are further reflected in comparisons analyzing engagement of students who attend day versus evening classes. Evening classes often are populated predominantly by part-time

Part-Time Students Are Less Engaged ...

Part-time students represent about two-thirds of community college students, and results across all benchmarks indicate that they are significantly less engaged in their educational experience than are full-time students.

... With Their Classmates

47%

47% of part-time students never worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.

31%

31% of full-time students never worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.

... And with Instructors

51%

51% of part-time students never discussed ideas from readings or classes with an instructor outside of class.

39%

39% of full-time students never discussed ideas from readings or classes with an instructor outside of class.

Reflections on Results

Many of these findings may be attributed, of course, to the obvious fact that part-time students spend less time on campus than their counterparts, thus decreasing the college's opportunity to engage them. Undoubtedly, it is difficult to promote student-faculty interaction with a group that essentially disappears from campus when class is over; but problems with engaging part-time students extend beyond this phenomenon. Why, for example, do part-time students report significantly less experience with active and collaborative learning than their full-time peers?

Because vital capture time is in short supply, engaging community college students happens by design, not by accident. Thus, community colleges might gain significant ground in retention and student learning by escalating their efforts to create intentionally engaging experiences — classroom activities, course requirements and assignments, and assessments — that get students actively involved in the learning process. In the same way, colleges can design the educational experience so that student and academic services are provided at times and places amenable to students' schedules — even integrated with classroom activities so participation is virtually inescapable.

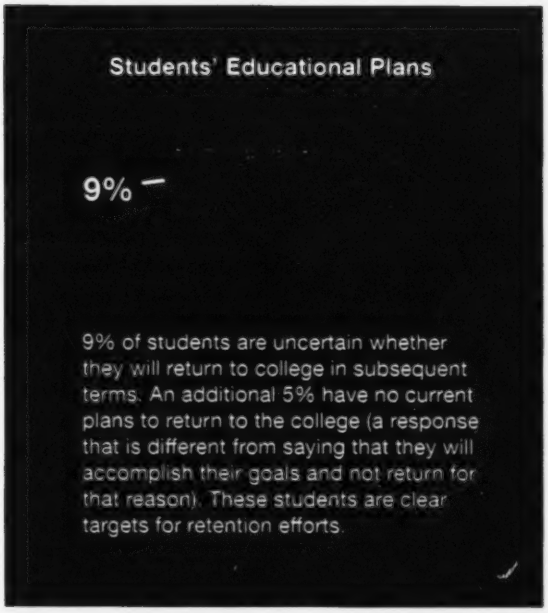
students, but they also are taught more frequently by adjunct faculty. For most colleges, the proportion of course sections taught by adjunct faculty is both large and increasing. So as colleges review these survey results, they may consider the possibility that they face challenges engaging part-time *faculty* as well as part-time *students*.

Student Persistence Remains a Challenge

For community colleges nationally, three benchmarks address practices that are critically important in student retention: the extent to which students are engaged in active and collaborative learning, the degree of student-faculty interaction, and the college's support for learners. In addition to findings previously discussed, the following results suggest key opportunities for improvement.

Challenging Findings

- ★ Only 23% of students surveyed indicate that they have taken an orientation or college success course or program.
- ★ 34% of students report that they rarely or never use academic advising/planning services.
- ★ Apart from transfer to a four-year college or university, a lack of finances is by far the most often-cited issue when students are asked to identify issues that would cause them to withdraw from class or from the college (46% indicate money problems as a very likely or likely cause).
- ★ 5% have no current plans to return to the college (a response that is different from saying that they will accomplish their goals and not return for that reason). Seven percent indicate that they have accomplished their goals and will not be returning, and 9% are "uncertain."


Students' Educational Plans
9%
9% of students are uncertain whether they will return to college in subsequent terms. An additional 5% have no current plans to return to the college (a response that is different from saying that they will accomplish their goals and not return for that reason). These students are clear targets for retention efforts.

Student Aspirations: Charting a Path Is Essential for Success

Given both research and experience indicating that goal-setting can be particularly important to at-risk students, several *CCSSE* findings add impetus to calls for advising strategies that are designed to be engaging.

- ★ *CCSSE* benchmark scores indicate that students who have completed 31 or more credit hours at their college are significantly more engaged in their educational experience than are students who have completed 30 or fewer credit hours.
- ★ The lowest levels of engagement are found among students who report either that they are undecided about their major program or that the question of a major emphasis is "not applicable" to them.
- ★ In a comparison of engagement results for credential-seeking versus noncredential-seeking students, *CCSSE* found that students who identify attainment of a certificate, attainment of an associate degree, or transfer as their primary educational goal tend to be substantially more engaged than their noncredential-seeking counterparts. They also are considerably more likely to participate in

developmental education, study skills courses, and college orientation; to frequently use an array of student and academic support services; to believe those services are important; and to be satisfied with the services they use. Finally, the credential-seeking students indicate stronger educational outcomes as a result of their experience in the college.

★ Female students indicate generally lower aspirations than male students — a finding that stands in contrast to other results. For example, female students report earning better grades than male students (71% report a B or better grade average, compared to 66% of men). Women come to class unprepared significantly less often than men (13% of women report coming to class unprepared often or very often, compared to 20% of men). And 53% of women, compared to 42% of men, report that they often or very often work harder than they thought they could to meet an instructor's standards.

★ Goals for first-generation students generally are more job- and career-related and less focused on academic attainment. These students are more likely to identify completion of a certificate program as a primary educational goal. They are significantly less likely than nonfirst-generation students to set a goal of transferring to a four-year college or university. (Only 38% of first-generation students aspire to transfer, compared with 52% of their nonfirst-generation peers.)

★ High-risk students are significantly less likely than low-risk students to set a goal of transferring to a four-year college or university. (40% of high-risk students aspire to transfer, compared to 60% of their low-risk peers.)

Promising Findings

As a group, African American, Hispanic, and Native American students state higher aspirations than their white classmates do in regard to both attainment of an associate degree (60% of students of color versus 58% of their white classmates) and transfer to a four-year institution (57% of students of color versus 43% of their white classmates). Clearly, the task at hand is to convert these aspirations into reality for much larger numbers of students of color.

Promising Results for Students of Color

The benchmark scores show a promising pattern for students of color. Taken as a group, African American, Hispanic, and Native American students are more engaged than their fellow students who are white. Though the differences are fairly small, they are consistent, and they suggest that students of color are exerting relatively more effort while experiencing greater academic challenge. They also are reporting higher levels of support for learners at their colleges.

Reflections on Results

Aspirations precede success, so for many community college students, academic goal-setting and planning are important undertakings — tasks so important that they can determine whether particular students persist until they reach their academic goals.

Community college students juggle work, family, and budgets, so they have multiple competing priorities for spending their time and money. It is critical that community colleges help them chart a visible course, establish meaningful mile-markers, and gauge their progress. That process will equip students with compelling reasons to persist — to return to class next Monday, next January, next school year.

Clearly, community college students have multiple goals — a fact that exacerbates the challenge of creating appropriate accountability for these diverse institutions. On the other hand, we must acknowledge the substantial and unacceptable gaps that limit student success: the gap between the goals students state for themselves (as indicated through *CCSSE* data and other research) and the educational milestones they actually attain; the gap between the goals they may initially set and the higher achievements of which they often are capable; and the attainment gaps between wealthy and white Americans and their classmates — students of color and the less affluent.

Promising Findings

In a comparison of white/non-Hispanic students with non-Asian minorities (i.e., African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans), the data show encouraging patterns:

- ★ Overall, the students of color report slightly higher levels of engagement in the classroom, in interaction with faculty members, and in serious conversations with students of a difference race or ethnicity than their own.
- ★ Students of color give their colleges significantly higher ratings for providing academic, social, and financial support to help them succeed. They also give similarly high ratings for relationships with students, instructors, and administrators on campus.
- ★ In general, more minority students report using key academic and student services (e.g., academic advising/planning, career counseling, financial aid advising, tutoring, skill labs) than do white students. They also rate the whole range of support services as significantly more important than do white students; and finally, students of color report generally higher levels of satisfaction with the services they use.
- ★ Minority students also recognize the challenges that they often bring to college with them, indicating a higher likelihood that full-time jobs, caring for dependents, and academic underpreparation are "very likely" reasons that they would drop out of school.
- ★ Across the board, students of color are significantly more likely to estimate that the college has contributed "very much" or "quite a bit" to learning outcomes, including acquisition of a broad general education, writing, speaking, solving numerical problems, understanding self, understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, and learning effectively on their own.
- ★ Relatively speaking, minority students seem to perceive that they are well served by their community colleges.

*Educational Testing Service, *The American Community College Turns 100*, 2000.

Closing the Gaps: A Look at High-Risk Students

CCSSE is committed to helping colleges use data in their efforts to close critical gaps in educational attainment. Toward that end, *CCSSE* has identified, and is tracking data for, high-risk students. These students are disproportionately African American, Hispanic, and female.

Students are considered high risk if they exhibit several factors that are shown to jeopardize undergraduates' attainment of their educational goals. Community college students generally are three to four times more likely to reflect those factors than are their counterparts in four-year colleges and universities.*

The following risk factors are reflected in the *CCSSE* survey:

- ★ being academically underprepared (i.e., students who have not earned a high school diploma and/or have participated or plan to participate in developmental/remedial education);
- ★ being a single parent;
- ★ being financially independent (i.e., students who rely on their own income or savings as a major source for college costs and indicate that parents and spouses/significant others are not sources of income for that purpose);
- ★ caring for children at home;
- ★ working more than 30 hours per week;
- ★ being a first-generation college student;

"The CCSSE Web site is a formidable resource, and with it, we are well on our way to creating a 'culture of evidence' about the effectiveness of teaching and learning that can guide instructors, administrators, and researchers who want to make a difference."

— **Terry O'Banion**
Director, Community College Leadership Program, Walden University
President Emeritus, League for Innovation in the Community College

- being a part-time student; and
- identifying the cost of attending college as a significant issue.

Each year, *CCSSE* analyzes student responses on the risk factors and creates three groups of student survey respondents: low-risk students, who exhibit zero or one of the risk factors; moderate-risk students, who exhibit two to four risk factors; and high-risk students, who exhibit five or more risk factors.

In 2003, 17% of *CCSSE* respondents were high-risk students, about two-thirds (66%) were moderate-risk students, and only 17% fell into the low-risk category. Findings for high-risk students in 2003 are consistent with 2002 results. They show that community colleges are offering services designed to address issues related to risk and that students are using and benefiting from these services. Continuing support for high-risk students is essential for community and technical colleges, as success with these students is among the most significant contributions they can make to their communities and states.

Reflections on Results

These promising findings for students of color and students at risk stand in marked contrast to other facts of life in American higher education. National statistics document disturbing and stubborn realities. African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans, along with low-income students, still are underrepresented in terms of college participation, and they are less likely to persist, graduate, and transfer than are their white peers. As promising as the *CCSSE* results appear to be, these gaps tell a critical story.

In the *CCSSE* results, we are seeing, in part, the significant additional effort that is the mark of minority students and "high-risk" students who are successful in community colleges. But *CCSSE* also is surveying a sample of students who already have cleared a range of often-daunting obstacles, such as financial aid applications and decisions, the registration process, and in most cases, their first semester of college. Colleges that do careful cohort tracking generally note that when community colleges lose students, they lose them early. All of these findings together illustrate the critical importance of connecting with students from the moment of their earliest encounter with the college. In other words, ***Engage early. Engage often.***

Findings for High-Risk Students

- **Educational goals.** High-risk students are less likely to set transferring to a four-year institution as a primary goal — 40% of high-risk students versus 60% of low-risk students have that goal. High-risk students are more likely to aim for completion of an associate degree (65% of high-risk students versus 54% of low-risk students).
- **Effort.** High-risk students appear to be exerting significant effort to succeed. This finding is not surprising because they are overcoming significant challenges to attend college. High-risk students are much less likely to come to class unprepared (one-third say they never come unprepared as opposed to 20% of low-risk students). They also are more likely to ask questions and participate in class discussions and are more likely to prepare two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in. They devote as much time to studying as do their lower-risk classmates, despite more demanding commitments outside of school (78% of the high-risk group work more than 30 hours per week compared to 7% of the low-risk group; 60% spend more than 20 hours per week caring for dependents compared to 8% of low-risk students).
- **Campus services.** High-risk students also are taking advantage of services offered by their colleges. They are more likely to give high ratings to the importance of tutoring, skill labs, financial aid advising, academic advising/planning, and career counseling. Moreover, the more risk factors students face, the more likely they are to participate in study-skills classes, college orientation courses, and success courses. However, high-risk students' satisfaction with these services, in absolute terms, is lukewarm. It is possible that high-risk students, who are predominantly part-time students, may find it difficult to take advantage of services offered primarily during traditional business hours.

Overview of 2003 Survey Respondents

In spring 2003, 65,300 students responded to the *CCSSE* survey, which is administered during class sessions at *CCSSE* member colleges. An overview of the participating colleges and their students is provided below. Details about the member colleges, student respondents, and the survey sampling and administration process are available at www.ccsse.org.

- *CCSSE*'s more than 65,000 respondents in 2003 comprise about 1.2% of the 5.6 million credit students in U.S. public community colleges. These students are from 93 community and technical colleges — nearly 8% of all public community colleges in the United States — in 31 states. (One participating college is in Canada.)
- Of the 93 participating colleges, 46 are classified as small (4,499 or fewer students), 21 as medium (4,500–7,999 students), 13 as large (8,000–14,999 students), and 13 as extra large (15,000 or more students).
- Colleges reported their locations as 47% urban, 27% suburban, and 26% rural. IPEDS 2002 data indicate that among all U.S. community colleges, 40% are urban, 24% are suburban, and 36% are rural.
- Students who responded to the survey generally reflect the underlying student population of the participating colleges in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity. Part-time students, however, were underrepresented in the *CCSSE* sample because of the survey's sampling technique and in-class administration process. To address this discrepancy, results are weighted by part-time and full-time status to reflect institutions' actual proportions of part- and full-time students.
- Nearly 60% of survey respondents were female, and about 40% were male. These figures are similar to the national community college student ratio, which is 57% female and 43% male. (NCES, 2002)
- With respect to race/ethnicity, 2003 *CCSSE* respondents and the national community college population may be compared as follows: (NCES, 2003)

Race/Ethnicity	*CCSSE* Respondents*	National Percentages*
White	67	64
Black	10	12
Hispanic/Latin	10	14
Native American	4	1
Asian/Pacific Islander	5	7

* Percentages do not add to 100% because of respondents indicating "other."

" For many community college leaders, [CCSSE] is a critical first step in a deeper study of a system that now claims almost half of all U.S. undergraduate students in colleges and universities."

— **"Two-Year Colleges Going for Class"**
Chicago Tribune
January 26, 2003

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CCSSE National Advisory Board

Peter Ewell, *Chair*
Vice President
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

David Armstrong
Chancellor
Florida Community Colleges

George Boggs
President and CEO
American Association of Community Colleges

Russell Edgerton
Director
The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning

Joni E. Finney
Vice President
National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education

George Grainger
Grant Officer
Houston Endowment, Inc.

Zelema Harris
President
Parkland College (IL)

James Hudgins
Executive Director
The South Carolina Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education

Christine Johnson
President
Community College of Denver (CO)

George Kuh
Chancellor's Professor and Director
National Survey of Student Engagement
Indiana University

Byron N. McClenney
President
Kingsborough Community College (NY)

Alexander McCormick
Senior Scholar
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Mark Milliron
President and CEO
League for Innovation in the Community College

Steve Mittelstet
President
Richland College (TX)

Michael Nettles
Executive Director
Center for Policy Studies & Research
Educational Testing Service

Margot Perez-Greene
Director, NISOD
The University of Texas at Austin

Victoria Munoz Richart
President
Cascadia Community College (WA)

Jerry Sue Thornton
President
Cuyahoga Community College (OH)

Vincent Tinto
Distinguished Professor, Department of Higher Education
Syracuse University

CCSSE Technical Advisory Panel

George Kuh, *Chair*
Chancellor's Professor and Director
National Survey of Student Engagement
Indiana University

Peter Ewell
Vice President
National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Gary Hanson
Professor
Arizona State University

John Kennedy
Director
Center for Survey Research
Indiana University

Virginia McMillan
Executive Vice President
Illinois Community College Board

Bill Moore
Outcomes Assessment Manager
Washington State Board for Community College Education

Patricia Murrell
Director
Community College Student Experience Questionnaire
University of Memphis

Kent Phillippe
Senior Research Associate
American Association of Community Colleges

Gary R. Pike
Vice Chancellor, Student Life Studies
Adjunct Professor
University of Missouri-Columbia

CCSSE Staff

Kay M. McClenney
Director, CCSSE
Adjunct Professor, Community College Leadership Program

Evelyn N. Waiwaiole
Project Manager
MetLife Foundation Initiative on Student Success

C. Nathan Marti
Senior Research Associate

Jeff Crumpley
Senior Research Associate

Christine (LeBard) McLean
College Relations Coordinator

Judy Row
Survey Operations Coordinator

Kathy A. Thatcher
Administrative Associate

Jessica Felter
Administrative Assistant

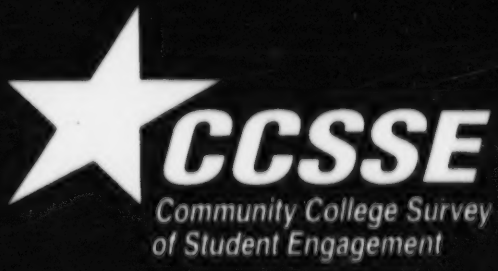
Rowland Cadena
Project Associate

***CCSSE* Member Colleges 2003**

For a list of *CCSSE* member colleges, visit www.ccsse.org.

Editorial and design by KSA-Plus Communications, Inc.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Community College Leadership Program, The University of Texas at Austin
1 University Station D5600 ▪ Austin, TX 78712-0378
Telephone: (512) 471-6807 ▪ Fax: (512) 471-4209
E-mail: info@ccsse.org ▪ Web site: www.ccsse.org

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

☑ This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

☐ This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").